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S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 000446

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/E AND S/CT  
STATE ALSO FOR EUR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [GR](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE DIPLOMATIC FALL-OUT FROM CANCELED GERMAN  
PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

REF: DJIBOUTI 441

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (C) Reftel conveys report of Djiboutian government reaction to cancellation of the March 24 visit to Djibouti of German President Rau. Embassy notes that the German Ambassador to Ethiopia (who also has responsibility for Djibouti), Helga Strachwitz, expressed considerable concern to Ambassador over remarks to Reuters News Agency about the canceled visit that were attributed to a CJTF-HOA spokesperson. These remarks appeared in a Washington Post article on March 24. The spokesperson, when queried about the German statement of a threat, is quoted as saying "that's news to us."

2. (C) The Reuters-originated story was carried in condensed form in the media here, but the spokesman's remarks were re-interpreted in French as indicating U.S. "surprise" over the German claims of a specific threat against Rau. Strachwitz told Ambassador March 25 that in her meeting with Foreign Minister Ali Abdi Farah the morning of March 24, the Foreign Minister was pleasant but chastised Germany for having made the decision to cancel the visit on security grounds and stated to her that "even the Americans were surprised by your government's allegations."

3. (C) As customarily happens in situations such as these, the Reuters' attribution was re-interpreted a second time in "La Nation" newspaper on March 25. There, it implied that the "U.S. counterterrorism group" said it was "not able to take seriously" the threats against Rau. Strachwitz stated to Ambassador that she believed the U.S. should issue an immediate refutation of its public remarks on the Rau threats, even moreso because the Djiboutian government was using those remarks as a basis to lambast Germany for cancelling the Rau visit. She told Ambassador that there had indeed been a specific threat against her President, that the threat emanated from Somalia and that individuals in Somaliland being interrogated in connection with the recent attack on the German organization, GTZ, had revealed details of the travel plans, flight pattern, ground schedules, spousal plans, meeting plans, etc. of the Rau visit -- information that would not normally have been in the purview of the Somali individuals. It was on that basis, she said, that the decision was made to cancel the Rau trip.

4. (C) Ambassador attempted to defuse the situation by assuring the German Ambassador that the quotes attributed in the local French press to the CJTF-HOA are not an accurate rendition of the spokesperson's remarks and that the U.S. Government has made no statement regarding the validity of the German allegations. Ambassador also met with CJTF-HOA Acting Commander, Colonel Jeff Mathis, who re-confirmed steps taken to ensure full coordination with the Embassy on press matters.

5. (S) Comment: The German Ambassador opined that there may be a need for greater intelligence coordination so that there is no daylight on threat information. Meanwhile, post will make clear that much of the confusion has been fueled by press inaccuracies. End comment.  
RAGSDALE